

From: OConnor, Dennis
Sent: Friday, June 25, 2004 12:08 PM
To: Cowin, Mark; Guivetchi, Kamyar; Dabbs, Paul
Cc: Lisa Beutler (E-mail)
Subject: Comments on draft water plan update

Just a couple of quick observations.

As I understand it, the current version is designed to reflect the views of the advisory committee. I think it does a good job of describing the broad points of agreement; i.e., near consensus. However, because it reflects the AC view, it is still fairly weak in its positions.

I think about the Gov.s "Action! Action! Action!" statement, and then read the recommended actions, and I don't see much action. I see a perhaps more enlightened status quo. I am particularly struck by the action plans in Chapter 5. "DWR will develop a work plan to implement this recommended action ..." is anemic. "DWR will effectively manage grants ..." is nothing new -- that's your job now.

I have similar concerns about the performance measures. "Annual funding dedicated for CALFED ..." will vary for a whole lot of reasons unrelated to investing in water conservation, etc. "Measured improvements in statewide water management objectives" sounds good, but the objectives are so broad, I'm not sure what the rubric is.

I could go on.

Again, I recognize that this language probably reflects the widest area of agreement among AC members. However, as the water code clearly points out, the role of the AC is to merely advise and assist. The department is responsible for the final product, and by inference, should reflect the department's/Governor's perspective.

So, in moving from an AC to administrative draft, I would suggest the following:

1) The draft lacks any sense of point of view or priorities. It needs both.

For illustrative purposes, lets assume the department believes that water conservation is virtually always an appropriate tool for increasing water reliability and that other strategies are more situationally dependent. If so, say so -- and prominently. Continuing my example, I would revise Recommended Action #1 to something like, "California needs to aggressively invest in water conservation. It is the one strategy that is almost always cost effective and appropriate. California also needs to investigate and implement other water management tools and strategies, such as surface storage, on a regional or case by case basis. These strategies can be useful in specific situations, and must be tailored appropriately." (or something like that).

The point is, I know staff, the Director and (presumably) the Governor have opinions on what the priorities should be. The plan should reflect those priorities.

2) Similarly, I don't get a sense of vision of where the department/Governor wants us to be in 2030. Peter Glick spoke eloquently on this point on numerous occasions. People can disagree about what that vision should be, but without some sort of vision, it is difficult for me to determine if the plan will help us achieve that vision.

3) The recommendations and implementation strategies don't seem targeted to achieve specific outcomes.

For example, Recommended Action #2 talks about the role of regions. Seems to me an appropriate strategy would be to do something like, refocus DWR district offices to do (something), convene regional water management coordination councils, form a task force to identify and remove barriers to effective regional water planning, etc. DWR will not be able to "develop the necessary tools to assist local and regional agencies be successful with the integrated water resources management and planning" if DWR doesn't first identify what the barriers are. This could only be done in collaboration with the local and regional agencies. (As an aside, don't forget federal agencies in this effort as well).

The more targeted the actions are to the problems to solve or goals to achieve the more likely the Legislature will be in assisting.

In closing, it seems to me that up to now the AC has done all the heavy lifting policy wise. I believe they have teed up the issues well. It is now time for DWR to step in and focus it to reflect DWR/Governor's policies. Hope this helps

Dennis

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